



CEBIDIUS VIRIDIS.

ORIOLOUS VIRIDIS.

New South Wales Oriole.

- Gracula viridis*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xxviii.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. vii. p. 473.
Loriot, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd Edit. p. liv.
Green Grackle, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 129.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 168.
Coracias sagittata, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xxvi.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 400.
Striated Roller, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 122.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 83.
Streaked Roller, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 84, young.
Mimetes viridis, King, Survey of Intertropical Coast of Australia, vol. ii. p. 419.
Mimeta viridis, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 326.—Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. ii. pl. 61.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit. p. 38.
——— *Meruloïdes*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 327, young.
Oriolus viridis, Vieill., 2nd Edit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xviii. p. 197.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., part ii. p. 697.
——— *variegatus*, Vieill., 2nd Edit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xviii. p. 196.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., part ii. p. 696.
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THIS bird was first described by Latham, by whom it was placed in the genus *Gracula*, but it agrees in no respect with the members of that genus, and “in fact,” says Captain King, “the genus *Oriolus* is that to which it bears the closest resemblance in its general appearance. I would at once refer it to that genus, but that I have some reason to think that it belongs to the meliphagous birds. . . . Of the tongue or mode of feeding I can myself say nothing decisively; but general opinion places this bird among the groups that feed by suction, and as I have a second species hitherto undescribed which is closely allied to it, I prefer forming both provisionally into a new genus” (*Mimetes*) “to referring them to one, from which, although they agree with it in external appearance, they may be totally remote in consequence of their internal anatomy and habits of life. If the tongue be found to accord with that of the *Orioles* and not of the *Honey-suckers*, my group of course must fall.” Messrs. Jardine and Selby took the same view of the subject when describing and figuring the bird in their “Illustrations of Ornithology,” and have given a description of the structure of the tongue, which certainly offers a slight resemblance to that of the true meliphagous birds; but my own observations of the bird in a state of nature enable me to affirm that in appearance, habits, economy, and in the nature of its food it is truly an Oriole, to which group of birds it was correctly assigned by M. Vieillot in the second edition of the “Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle,” and that consequently Captain King's generic term *Mimetes* must sink into a synonym of *Oriolus*.

The true and probably the restricted habitat of this species is New South Wales, where in the months of summer it is tolerably plentiful in every part of the colony. I frequently observed it in the Botanic Garden at Sydney, and in all the gardens of the settlers where there were trees of sufficient size to afford it shelter; the brushes of the country, the sides of brooks and all similar situations are equally inhabited by it. I did not find it in South Australia, neither has it been observed to the westward of that part of the country. That its range extends pretty far to the northward I have no doubt, as its numbers rather increased than diminished in the neighbourhood of the rivers Peel and Namoi; and many persons would, I feel assured, assign to it a much more extended range by considering it identical with the bird of the same form found at Port Essington,—an opinion in which I cannot myself coincide, believing as I do that the latter bird is a distinct species, although at a hasty glance it would appear to be one and the same; the general colouring of the two birds is, it is true, very similar, but the following differences exist and are found to be constant:—The Port Essington bird (for which the specific term *affinis* would be an appropriate appellation) is smaller in the body, has a shorter wing, a much larger bill, and the white spots at the tip of the lateral tail-feathers considerably smaller than the bird inhabiting New South Wales; in other respects they are so precisely alike that it will not be necessary to figure both.

The following notes descriptive of their habits and economy are equally applicable to the one and the other.

The bird observed by me in New South Wales was bold and active, and was often seen in company with the Regent, Satin and Cat Birds, feeding in the same trees and on similar berries and fruits, particularly the small wild fig. It possesses a loud pleasing whistling note, which is poured forth while the bird is perched on a lofty branch. I often observed it capturing insects on the wing and flying very high, frequently above the tops of the loftiest trees.

Mr. Gilbert states that the Port Essington bird is “abundant in every part of the peninsula and the

adjacent islands in every possible variety of situation. Its native name is *Mur-re-a-woo*. It possesses a very loud and distinct note, unlike that of every other bird I have yet heard; the sound most commonly uttered is a loud clear whistle terminating in a singular guttural harsh catch, but in the cool of the evening, when perched on and sheltered in the thick foliage of one of the topmost branches of a *Eucalyptus*, it pours forth a regular succession of very pleasing notes.

A nest taken on the 4th of December contained two nearly hatched eggs; it was attached by the rim to a drooping branch of the swamp *Melaleuca*, about five feet from the ground; was very deep and large, and formed of very narrow strips of the paper bark mixed with a few small twigs, the bottom of the interior lined with very fine wiry twigs.

The eggs, which are large for the size of the bird, are of a beautiful bluish white, sparingly spotted all over with deep umber-brown and bluish-grey, the latter appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; their medium length is one inch and three lines long by eleven lines broad.

The sexes when fully adult differ so little in colour that they can scarcely be distinguished; the male is however of a more uniform tint about the head, neck and throat, and has the yellowish olive of the upper surface of a deeper tint than the female.

Head and all the upper surface yellowish olive; wings and tail-feathers dark brown; the outer webs of the coverts and secondaries grey, margined and broadly tipped with white; all but the two centre tail-feathers with a large oval-shaped spot of white on the inner, and the extremity of the outer web white, the white mark gradually increasing in size as the feathers recede from the centre until it becomes an inch long on the external one; under surface white, washed with olive-yellow on the sides of the chest, each feather with an elongated pear-shaped mark of black down the centre; bill dull flesh-red; irides scarlet; feet lead-colour.

The young bird during the first year has the bill blackish brown instead of dull flesh-red; the upper surface olive-brown, each feather strongly streaked down the centre with dark brown; wings brown; under surface of the shoulder and all the wing-feathers except the primaries margined with sandy red; the black streaks on the breast more decided, and the white spot at the tip of the lateral tail-feathers much smaller than in the adult.

The figures represent the two sexes of the natural size on a plant gathered in the brushes of New South Wales, the name of which I have not been able to ascertain.